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>>> Molly Zink <zink.family@sbcglobal.net> 9/5/2006 9:02 AM >>>

I served on a jury in Oakland County Circuit court a few years ago (I believe it was 2002), and was chosen the foreperson in the deliberation room. The trial was for Ms. Carmen Rappuhn, who was convicted of first degree murder of her baby boy, whom was born in her bathroom and left in her bedroom to die, while she was taken to the ER for "abdominal pain".

The prosecution laid down a very orderly case, and while the defense did decent cross examination, he didn't call any witnesses, i.e. Ms. Rappuhn or her family, to defend her. Because of this, it was a fairly cut and dry case as far as our jury was concerned. Guilt was never in question, but rather intent -- manslaughter or murder. We settled on murder largely because after repeatedly denying that she had had a baby (even though every doc who examined her could tell she had), she finally, about 8-10 hours later, caved and told where the baby was. Had she not been hiding the truth, he could have been saved, but she waited long enough for him to die, then came clean. It makes me ill even today to think about it.

As far as the proposed jury reforms, based on my experience, I think it would be very helpful to be able to take notes. We were only in court about 3 days, and there was only the prosecutor's case, no new witnesses from the defense; it was still a lot of information to digest. Reading over your own notes and keeping the discussion going, rather than the tedious process of requesting the transcript from certain parts of the trial and then waiting for it to come to the jury room, would help jog our memories and would keep the flow of discussion going. If people's notes were different from each other, you can always get the transcript to verify what was really said. That would actually be an interesting study to see what different notes/impressions come from the same testimony.

It is a huge time burden to be on a jury -- especially when it's a murder case. Anything that can be done to keep the deliberation flowing and help the jury reach a verdict efficiently would be good.

Respectfully,
Molly Zink
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